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In support of HB 6499

I am here to testify in support the HB6499 as a minor revision. I believe that this is a first step that hopefully leads to the mandate that Connecticut schools teach Holocaust and Genocide education as it is witnessed in the states of Illinois, California, New York, New Jersey, and Florida.

Presently, I serve as the district director of visual and performing arts for the Bloomfield Connecticut Public Schools. As the director of this district wide department, I not only administer arts programs but have also initiated and included issues of human rights and Genocide throughout the arts curriculum in the Bloomfield Schools. I have spoken on the issue of Genocide education statewide and recently lectured on the subject for UNESCO in Kigali, Rwanda at the International Human Rights Conference. We need your help and leadership in addressing the passive nature of our history curriculum in high schools in regards to Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights education – a very basic ideology.

Since the dawn of time, every culture has experienced the degradation of their humanity, whether it is by slavery, servitude or ethnic cleansing. As an educator and a passionate advocate for human rights, it is a shame that the state of Connecticut needs a law mandating inclusion of a Holocaust/ Genocide education component in the history or social studies curriculum in Connecticut high schools in order to instruct on this material.

Each year, countless Holocaust survivors pass away. With their passing goes an incalculable amount of wisdom and knowledge of the Holocaust of the last century. The heroes of World War II are dying out as well, yet we will not forget their sacrifices because it is part of our American History curriculum. British statesman, Edmund Burke, (1729-1797) shakes a noble finger at us through his statement, "Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it." The Holocaust of World War II witnessed over 11 million lives lost, in Rwanda, in 99 days, 800,000 Tutsis were slaughtered because they were not of the right ethnic group and in Dar fur millions of lives lost have not yet been completely accounted. If we do not educate our young people to understand the signs and symptoms that are precursors to Genocide, then the world may yet again be allowed to repeat it.

After World War II, the term "Never Again" rang across the world. If we do not educate our young people in the sacrifices and lessons of the Holocaust, they will never know what occurred. The atrocities are so outrageous; it is unbelievable to fathom how man can be so inhumane to his own species. Without evidence and the knowledge of past and present day occurrences – to the uneducated, Genocide seems but a fabrication. A law mandating Holocaust/Genocide education will assure that the young people of Connecticut will truly never forget.

I humbly ask that you bring to the legislature this minor revision as a first step and as an example to school districts in the rest of our country.

I would like to end my testimony with a message from the past.

First they came... is a famous statement attributed to Pastor Martin Niemöller (1892–1984) about the inactivity of German intellectuals following the Nazi rise to power and the purging of their chosen targets, group after group. The text of the quotation is usually presented roughly as follows:

First they came... - Pastor Martin Niemöller

First they came for the communists,
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews,
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for me
and there was no one left to speak out for me.

This is not the model I want for my students. This is not the model I want for future generations of children in this state, in this nation or in the world. You on this committee can speak out for my children.

Thank you.

Holocaust/Genocide Education Laws

Country or State	Year of First Enactment	Citation	Key Wording
Florida	1994	<u>F.S. 1003.42(2)(g)</u>	The history of the Holocaust (1933-1945), the systematic, planned annihilation of European Jews and other groups by Nazi Germany, a watershed event in the history of humanity, to be taught in a manner that leads to an investigation of human behavior, an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions.
New Jersey	1991	<u>N.J.S. 18A:4A</u>	<p>Every board of education shall include instruction on the Holocaust and genocides in an appropriate place in the curriculum of all elementary and secondary school pupils.</p> <p>The instruction shall enable pupils to identify and analyze applicable theories concerning human nature and behavior: to understand that genocide is a consequence of prejudice and discrimination: and to understand that issues of moral dilemma and conscience have a profound impact on life. The instruction shall further emphasize the personal responsibility that each citizen bears to fight racism and hatred whenever and wherever it happens.</p>
Illinois	1989	<u>105 ILCS 5/27-20.3</u>	Holocaust and Genocide Study. Every public elementary school and high school shall include in its curriculum a unit of instruction studying the events of the Nazi atrocities of 1933 to 1945. This period in world history is known as the Holocaust, during which 6,000,000 Jews and millions of non-Jews were exterminated. One of the universal lessons of the Holocaust is that national, ethnic, racial, or religious hatred can overtake any nation or society, leading to calamitous consequences.
California	1985	<u>California Code Section 51220</u>	Instruction shall provide a foundation for understanding ... human rights issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery, and the Holocaust, and contemporary issues.

New York	1994	<u>Education Title</u> <u>1 Art. 17, Sec.</u> <u>801</u>	the regents of the University of the State of New York shall prescribe courses of instruction in patriotism (and) citizenship and human rights issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery, and the Holocaust, to be maintained and followed in all the schools of the state.
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